

Bungle Bungles & the Osmond Range : April 12 – May 2, 2009

Note. In August 2007, we were informed that it might no longer be possible to do the walk as described in section three. We still plan to run the trip at the advertised dates, but we may be forced to change the itinerary. Whatever we do, it will remain an outstanding series of walks. Anyone booking before the itinerary can be finalised will be given the option of a full refund once the new itinerary is published.

Section 1: The Osmond Range: April 12-18

Although this area is within walking distance of the Bungles, it could hardly be more different. The rocks are more angular. Most of the creeks are spring fed and flow well into the dry season. The vegetation remains green and includes the southernmost monsoon forest in the Kimberley. Part of the walk is on Aboriginal owned land. We have been fortunate to receive permission to walk there.

The start of our Osmond walk is about 280 kilometres from Kununurra. The last 20-30 kilometres is along a very rough 4WD track, so the drive takes most of the day. We camp somewhere on Big Brim or Little Brim Creek near where we leave the vehicles. Exactly where we leave the vehicles will depend on the condition of the track at the time.

The most interesting part of the area is along the edge and on top of the plateau. The terrain is quite varied. In some places we will have to scramble up steep slopes; in others the walking should be flat and easy. Sometimes we will drop our packs and do a day or half-day walk. At other times, we will carry the packs and shift camp from one creek to another.

The vegetation can change dramatically from year to year, so dramatically that the guide on our 2004 trip could scarcely recognise the areas that were described in our notes from 2001. The one constant is the lovely gorges, pools and waterfalls which make the Osmonds a special place. At the end of the week, we return to the vehicles and drive out to Turkey Creek where we can get a cold drink and something fresh before driving into the Bungles.

Terrain and difficulty

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Overall | Level 3. |
| Climate | This is a relatively hot time of year. The temperature will reach the low to mid 30's most days. Temperatures of 35°C are not uncommon. The heat reflecting back from the sand and rocks in some areas can make it feel hotter still. The humidity is normally relatively low so the heat will not feel as uncomfortable as it does during the wet season. Nighttime minimum temperatures average 18-20°C but can go down to about 10C so you need to be prepared for cold nights. The pools, especially those which get some sun, are much more comfortable for swimming than they are later in the year. Although rain is unlikely, it is common enough so you should be prepared for a rainy day or two. |
| Terrain | Level 2-4. Although some of the terrain is quite open and easy, much of the walking will be done in narrow gorges. There will be some clambering over large rocks and some edging along narrow ledges. There will also be one long and strenuous climb. As we have not done all of this section before, you must be prepared for at least as strenuous a walk as on the first two sections. |
| Vegetation | Level 2-3. The vegetation can vary dramatically from year to year. We may encounter thick scrub and spinifex or there may be little thick vegetation to push through. |
| Hours | You normally walk 4-6 hours per day. |
| Packs | Waterproofing. We recommend you bring a garbage bag for waterproofing on the off chance that you might get some rain. Pack weight: level 3 = one week's food, but you do not normally carry a full pack every day. |
| Art | None found to date. |
| Campsites | Flat areas in the Osmonds tend to be small so some of our campsites are likely to be more crowded or more spread out than normal depending on how large and/or how far apart the tent sites are. |
| Swims | Magnificent pools and flowing creeks. |
| Lowlights | Steep climbs and thick spinifex (some years). Flies and cattle in the lowlands. |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Highlights | Beautiful pools, gorges and waterfalls; expansive views out over the plains. |
| Fishing | Possible, especially near the beginning and end. We had a couple of fresh fish meals on our first trip to the area. |

Notes for Section 1

The difference in 2005 was even more dramatic than the one referred to in the notes above. With only one major rainfall during the wet season, the lovely pools and waterfalls which make the top of the Osmonds such a special place had dried up and almost disappeared. This was in stark contrast to our first trip which was in August, normally a much drier time. If we have reason to believe that the 2005-06 wet season has been similar to the one in 2004-05, we will shift this section to the wetter Carr Boyd Range.

Most of this walk is in an area where campfires are permitted.

Those leaving at the end of this section may be driven back to Kununurra from Turkey Creek or they may be flown back from Turkey Creek or the Bungles. We cannot be sure which transport we will use until we see how many are joining or leaving.

Those continuing to section two will be able to leave their food for this section in the vehicle during the first walk. It may be possible to have a few fresh things brought in with those joining for section two.

Maps. Kimberley Tourist map and the Turkey Creek 1:100 000 or the Bungle Bungle and Texas Downs 1:50 000 topographic maps.

Section 2: Piccaninny Creek, Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park: April 18-25

In mid 2003, Purnululu joined the list of Australia's World Heritage locations. Here's what the Department of Environment and Heritage has to say. "Famous for the 45 000 hectare Bungle Bungle Range, with its huge expanse of striking banded beehive structures, sandstone cliffs and towers, Purnululu has been listed as an outstanding landscape that is a superlative natural phenomenon, revealing the history of its formation over hundreds of millions of years. Purnululu National Park has such outstanding universal natural values that it enriches the world and should be conserved for the benefit of all people. Before 1982, when aerial pictures were first released, it was virtually unknown except to pastoralists, scientists and the local Aboriginal community. It is now seen as one of the scenic jewels of outback Australia."

There are many tours which will take you to Purnululu. No other tour will allow you to experience as much of the park in as intimate a fashion as ours.

The start of our Bungles walks is about 130 kilometres from Turkey Creek (330 km from Kununurra). The last 80 kilometres is a 4WD track, so the drive will take some hours.

Our walk takes us to a base camp about 12–13 kilometres up Piccaninny Gorge, where sheer red cliffs are silhouetted against the clear blue skies of the dry season. Piccaninny is by far the largest gorge in the Bungles. We spend three or four nights there using the days to explore the many fascinating side gorges.

These gorges offer a variety of delights — some are palm filled, some are very narrow and require swimming, some have caves which require the use of a torch. There is at least one gorge that allows us to reach a high point. (We cannot climb to the actual top as climbing up the domes themselves is not permitted because of their exceptionally fragile nature. We can, however, follow watercourses as far as they will take us.) No words can do justice to the beauty of the area. The only way to appreciate it is to come and see it for yourself.

On the final day, we return to the vehicle and drive to the airstrip where we drop off anyone doing only this section and collect those joining for section three. Those leaving will fly back to Kununurra.

Terrain and difficulty

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Overall | Level 3 |
| Climate | As for section one. |
| Terrain | With packs - level 2: flat, minimal rock hopping, some ledging, some soft sand. The long walk up the Piccaninny Gorge, mainly over pebbles and sand can be quite tiring for many people. |

Going beyond our first base camp, done with full packs on some trips, requires some clambering over large rocks and includes edging along at least one narrow ledge. Daywalks without packs - level 4. Most of the day walks involve clambering over large rocks. Some include steep climbs. Some people find this very difficult, even without full packs. Although this difficulty is often more psychological than physical, it can be very real. The only reason this section is not rated "difficult" is that the hardest parts are done without full packs.

The climb up one of the gorges is particularly strenuous. Few groups have had every member go all the way. If you don't wish to do the rock scrambling, you need to be prepared to relax and enjoy their surroundings while the others continue. Keen birdwatchers often find this especially pleasant. Some people become uncomfortable in the absence of the rest of the group. Please keep this in mind when choosing this trip.

Vegetation

With packs - level 1: minimal vegetation

Without packs - level 2-4: some walks include dense sections of sharp and/or sticky spinifex, gaiters essential, long trousers recommended.

Hours

You normally walk 4-6 hours per day.

Packs

As for section one.

Art:

Two minor sites

Campsites

Mostly on sand, might include rock ledges on some nights. Rain rare but could cause change of site.

Swims

Reasonable, often fairly cold. Depends very much on the just finished wet season.

Lowlights

Helicopters intrusive most of day, aircraft early and late. Not as bad as later in the year.

Highlights

Incredible and spectacular gorge scenery, each one uniquely different from the others.

Fishing

No.

Notes for Section 2

Those joining at the start of this section may be driven from Kununurra to Turkey Creek or they may be flown into Turkey Creek or the Bungles. We cannot be sure which transport we will use until we see how many are joining or leaving at this point.

Those who wish to do a half hour helicopter flight over the Bungles will have an opportunity to do so either on arrival or just before departure from the park. Which time we choose depends on when we arrive. (In 2005, the helicopter flight cost \$225.)

Those continuing to section three will be able to leave their food for this section in the vehicle during the first walk. It may be possible to have a few fresh things brought in with the plane that changes the passengers. We will not know this until shortly before the trip begins.

All this area is a stove only area. Campfires are not permitted.

You will need to bring a small bag for toilet paper as neither burning nor burying are permitted.

Maps. Kimberley Tourist map and the Turkey Creek 1:100 000 or Bungle Bungle 1:50 000 topographic map.

Section 3: Piccaninny East, Purnululu National Park: April 25 - May 2

If anyone is joining or leaving, we will begin with the 15 km drive from the Piccaninny car park to the airstrip. Otherwise, we will continue straight onto the next walk. We visit a very different area to the east of Piccaninny where we find a landscape full of pools, gorges, open areas and interesting rock formations.

There are two main routes to get to our first campsite. One is flat and straightforward. The other is longer and takes us through some of the domes. Which one you do will depend on time as well as on the interests and abilities of the group.

That camp site will be next to one of a number of large pools on a tributary of Piccaninny Creek which is far more open than Piccaninny itself. We normally have some excellent sunrise views back toward the Bungle domes the next morning.

From here, we trek across the fairly flat, dry plains to yet another branch of Piccaninny Creek. The vegetation is quite different to that we will encounter elsewhere in the park. In some years, the floral displays are spectacular. In others, they are much less so. We spend the next five days exploring the area with its many large pools and interesting gorges. As on the first section, there may be some day walks where you do not need to carry a full pack. Whether or not this is the case will depend on the interests and abilities of the group.

On the second last day, we return back to near where we camped on the first night on this section. The following morning we return to the vehicle and drive back to Kununurra.

Terrain and difficulty

As for section one unless otherwise indicated below.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Terrain | Level 2-3. May carry packs up moderate climb. Some soft sand. Although much of the terrain is more open than that in the first section, there is likely to be some clambering over large rocks and some edging along narrow ledges. Daywalk terrain includes less rock/boulder hopping, but still moderate amount. As we are still exploring some of this area, we cannot be certain what we will find on every day walk. |
| Vegetation | Level 2-4. Pack walk through potentially thick sharp spinifex plains, gaiters essential, long trousers recommended. Vegetation usually at its thickest near beginning and end of walk. The vegetation can, however, vary dramatically from year to year. We may encounter the thick scrub and spinifex as suggested or we may miss it almost entirely. |
| Art | Two or more art sites, one of which is the best of the those we have found to date. |
| Swims | On average, larger pools, somewhat warmer than in Piccaninny Gorge. |
| Lowlights | Aircraft noise early morning and late afternoon. Much less intrusive than Piccaninny. |
| Highlights | Large beautiful pools, expansive views out over the plains and domes below, deep gorges - but not as spectacular as Piccaninny itself. |

Notes for Section 3

Most, if not all, of this walk is in a stove only area where campfires are not permitted.

You will need to bring a small bag for toilet paper as neither burning nor burying are permitted.

As with section two, those who wish to do a half hour helicopter flight over the Bungles will have an opportunity to do so. Which time we choose depends on when we arrive and on whether or not anyone has to return to Kununurra in time for a late afternoon flight. If you want to do a helicopter flight at the end of this section, you should book it for an early departure well in advance.

Maps. Kimberley Tourist map and the Turkey Creek 1:100 000 or Bungle Bungle 1:50 000 topographic map.

Notes for All Sections.

Bringing fresh fruit, vegetables or honey into WA is illegal whether you come by road or plane. (You cannot even bring in boxes or other containers that once contained fruit or vegetables.) Bags are checked both on the highway and at the airport. There will be time to do some shopping in Kununurra.

A day pack is useful on all sections of this trip. However, if you don't have a daypack, you can empty your main pack and carry that.

Those doing more than one section of the trip have to carry only what they need on each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks.

All sections of this trip have been rated level three because of the day walks. If you had to carry a full pack every day, each would rate as level four.

You should always keep a water bottle, your lunch and some money with you during the drives as you cannot easily get into your pack during the journey. You should have enough money to pay for your drinks at the stops.

The flights depend on bookings. If one section does not run, we may drive in both directions.

Itinerary: Bungle Bungles & Osmond Range

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Osmond Range

Day 0 Section one begins in Kununurra. There are daily air and bus services between Kununurra and Perth and Darwin. Connections to the eastern states are normally made through Darwin. Pre-trip meeting 6.30 p.m., outdoor area, Kimberley Croc Backpackers. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance. Note.

Day 1 Pick up between 7.00 and 7.30 a.m. Pick up is from your accommodation in Kununurra provided you have given us the address at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. If you are unable to notify us where you are staying, the pick up is from in front of the Kununurra Visitors Centre.
Drive to the Osmonds. Stop en route to buy cool drinks, etc.
Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2–6 Bush camping. Carrying full packs on 1 or 2 days, day packs at other times, exploring gorges.

Day 7 Return to vehicles. Drive to Turkey Creek and then into the Bungles.
End of section 1.

Section 2 Piccaninny Gorge

Day 7 Those joining this are collected from their accommodation in Kununurra and taken out to meet us. You **must** contact us to confirm pickup details well before departure.
Drive to Piccaninny from pick up point and begin walk.

Day 8-13 Bushwalking. Carrying full packs some days, day packs at other times.

Day 14 Return to vehicle. Drive to airstrip. Those finishing here may fly or drive back to Kununurra.

Section 3 Piccaninny East

Day 14 Those joining this are collected from their accommodation in Kununurra and flown to the Bungles airstrip. You **must** contact us to confirm pickup details well before departure. Fly to Bungles and meet group.
Drive to Piccaninny car park and begin walk.

Day 15-20 Bushwalking. Carrying full packs some days, day packs at other times.

Day 21 Walk out to vehicle. Drive back to Kununurra.

Important Note **Regional Link** (formerly Air North), the only airline currently operating into Kununurra uses relatively small and has a baggage allowance of only 13 kg. Unless special arrangements have been made, if you are flying to Kununurra and your baggage weighs more than 13 kg, it may not get on the plane with you. (This would be very unusual but it is possible.)
Contact Regional Link for more details. Phone: 1800 627474 or (08) 8920 4000;
Fax: (08) 8920 4095; email: airnorth@regionallink.com.au
Qantas Link cancelled their peak season direct flights to and from Perth in late 2006. Call 131313 to see if they are running again.